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ART. I.—1. *Lettres écrites à un Provincial*, par BLAISE PASCAL. *Précédées d'un Eloge de Pascal*, par M. BORDAS DEMOULIN. Paris: Librairie de Firmin Didot, Frères. 1842. 12mo. pp. 395.

2. *Pensées de Pascal, précédées de sa Vie*, par MADAME PERIER, sa Sœur. Paris: Firmin Didot. 1842. 12mo. pp. 504.

GREAT precocity of genius, however developed or employed, seldom fails to excite at least as much alarm and pity as admiration in the judicious spectator. If not in itself a token of disease already formed, and working as a stimulus on the brain, it is sure to lead quickly to some morbid action of the physical frame, and ere long to dry up the fountains of life. The skilful horticulturist, by a forcing process, can compel the branch of a tree to make a premature and excessive display of fruit; but at the end of the year the limb is sure to perish. The energies of mind are equally exhausted, when compelled to yield their harvest out of season. The great law of compensation, which we find, on close scrutiny, to obtain everywhere in the scheme of Providence respecting mankind, under the glaring inequalities which appear on a superficial view, applies in a much greater degree than we are apt to imagine to the powers of the intellect. It seems as if only a given amount of work can be done. If more is accomplished at an early period, a shorter term of life remains for further achievements. So firmly is this truth established by uniform observation, that a

note of lamentation, a mournful presentiment, always minglest with the admiring applause which greets every new and wonderful effort of a youthful prodigy. We mourn that this early excellence should be purchased at so high a price, — that premature strength and beauty of mind should be doomed to premature decay.

Blaise Pascal, the boy Euclid, the contemporary and peer of Torricelli, Huygens, and Descartes, the scourge of the Jesuits, the boast of the Port Royal school of theologians and philosophers, the earliest writer of correct and elegant French prose, the master in eloquence of Bossuet, and the object of the unwilling homage even of Voltaire, died at the age of thirty-nine. All his important writings, except the "Thoughts," which was a posthumous publication, appeared several years before his death; and his most valuable contributions to science were made before he was thirty. As a boy, he seemed miraculously endowed, and the abundant promise of his youth was fully sustained by the rich fruit of his early manhood. Bodily weakness and suffering, to which he was a lifelong martyr, far from impairing, seemed only to heighten the preternatural acuteness and strength of his intellect, as a hectic flush improves the beauty and expressiveness of the features. All that he accomplished in science and philosophy, great as was its intrinsic value, only leaves the impression that he had much in reserve. His discoveries and inventions are rather the indications, than the full fruits, of the vigor and comprehensiveness of his genius. They showed what he might have done, if his ambition had been greater, or if it had not been so early checked and turned into a different channel by religious enthusiasm. One of the most remarkable of his scientific labors, his solution of certain problems relating to the cycloid, a task which had been proposed to all the geometers of Europe as a trial of strength, and which they had failed to accomplish, was executed by him as a diversion, during the weary and sleepless hours entailed upon him by wasting disease, that confined him to his couch, and made him incapable of holding a pen. As he had renounced science for a long time, the demonstrations remained for many days floating in his memory, before he even thought of committing them to paper. This he finally did at the solicitation of a friend, and performed the whole work of preparing them for the press in eight days. This

effort established his reputation as the first geometer of his time ; but the fame thus acquired was only another garland to be thrown on the tomb to which he was hastening. He heeded it not ; for religious exercises now absorbed his whole attention, and the immortal "Thoughts," the ablest and most eloquent apology for Christianity ever published in France, were the sole occupation of his dying hours.

No full and satisfactory account of his life and works has ever appeared. There are eulogies upon him in plenty, but they give only a meagre and fragmentary view of his labors, and supply few materials for a complete portrait of his character and genius. The memoir of him by his sister, Madame Perier, who shared the fervor of his religious feelings, is short, and gives us little more than a record of his bodily sufferings, and illustrations of the remarkable purity, generosity, severity of principle, and self-devotion, which characterized his whole life. We must make allowance for the bias of sisterly affection and pride ; but there is no cause to doubt the honest simplicity of the writer's intentions, and the anecdotes which she relates are authentic and interesting. Later authors among his countrymen, though they have added but few facts to his biography, have done full justice to his scientific merits, have celebrated his wit, his acuteness, and his eloquence, and have paid a willing tribute of admiration to the unequalled vigor, terseness, and purity of his style. But they have not fully appreciated his depth of thought and originality in speculation, his reasoning power, his sharp observation of human nature, or the consecration of all the traits of his genius by the most fervid piety. His current reputation as a philosophical thinker and eloquent advocate of religion will be more increased than diminished by the most rigid examination of his works.

Blaise Pascal was born in the summer of 1623, at Clermont, the capital of the province of Auvergne, in France. His father, Etienne Pascal, who had himself attained considerable reputation as a man of science and letters, superintended the education of his only son with rare devotion and judgment. That he might obtain greater facilities for instruction, he gave up the office which he had held at Clermont, and came to reside in Paris when Blaise was but eight years old. As the mother had died five years before, the boy was entirely dependent on paternal aid, and the signs

which he had already given of extraordinary natural endowments were enough to determine the father not to enter him at any college, but to take the whole task of his education on himself. So precious, though so frail, a gift of Providence, the delicacy of his bodily constitution being already apparent, was not lightly to be intrusted to the hands of strangers. The eager curiosity of the boy, fostered by his clear and quick perceptions of things, was not to be satisfied with the narrow range of studies at first allotted to him in consideration for his health. His father was wont to converse freely with him in answering his inquiries about the causes of phenomena that attracted his notice, and thus, without knowing it, probably stimulated his mind more than if he had allowed him to study the same subjects in books. To the young, oral instruction is vastly more exciting and effective than the most judicious selection of reading and exercises for the memory. The intention of the elder Pascal was, that his son should study only the languages during his tender years, with a view to cultivate the memory and the taste, while the more manly and exacting pursuits of mathematical and physical science were to be the employment of his early manhood. This wise scheme was frustrated by circumstances and the precocity of the child's genius.

The elder Pascal belonged to a small association of scientific men, among whom were Mersenne, Roberval, Le Pailleur, and Carcavi, who came together occasionally, in an informal way, to discuss new inventions and discoveries, and who kept up a correspondence with persons in the provinces and in foreign countries, who were interested in the same pursuits. They met in turn at the houses of the several members, and were united as much by personal regard as by the similarity of their tastes and occupations. The Academy of Sciences, which was established in 1666, was formed out of this society. Young Pascal was usually present at the meetings when they were held at his father's house, and the conversations which he heard probably stimulated his curiosity the more from the very fact that he was not allowed to study the subjects of the debate in books. When he was but twelve years old, his sister tells us, he wrote a short treatise upon sounds, in which he endeavoured to show why a plate, after it had been struck by a knife, immediately ceased ringing if it was touched by the hand. He was eager to know

the nature of geometry, of which he had often heard the associates speak. His father told him generally, that it related to the measurement of bodies, and showed how to construct figures with accuracy, and to ascertain their relations to each other. More information was refused ; but a promise was given, that he should study the subject after he had learned enough Latin and Greek. The importunate curiosity of the boy could not tolerate this delay. During his leisure hours, he shut himself up in a chamber, and with a piece of charcoal traced figures upon the floor, such as parallelograms, triangles, and circles, seeking to find their relative dimensions. He knew not even the names of these figures, but called a circle a *round*, and a line a *bar*. Definitions and axioms he framed to suit himself, and in this way proceeded by degrees, as we are told, till he came to a knowledge of the thirty-second proposition of Euclid, that the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles. While thus engaged, he was one day surprised by his father, who was naturally amazed at the progress made under such circumstances, and ran immediately to communicate the fact to his intimate friend, Le Pailleur. After this discovery, no further restraint was put upon the boy's genius. Euclid's "Elements" were given to him, and he read the book by himself, without asking any aid, before he was thirteen years old.

This account is given by the elder sister, who was in the family at the time, and must have known the facts ; and as her character does not allow her veracity to be questioned, there seems no room to doubt its substantial accuracy. It was published, also, when some of the associates of the elder Pascal were still alive, who could have refuted any misstatement. Yet the story seems so marvellous, that many have considered it a mere fable. The only part of the statement that is really incredible, however, is the explanation of the process, or method, by which the boy arrived at such astonishing results. The order in which geometry is taught in the books is surely the very reverse of that in which the great truths of this science were first discovered. Instead of beginning with axioms and definitions, and advancing through the more simple propositions to the more complex, the process must have begun with the discovery, either by accident or measurement, of some advanced the-

orem, and, in seeking to demonstrate this, subsidiary truths came to light as the media of proof. Pythagoras certainly was acquainted with the famous proposition about the square of the hypothenuse, before he was able to demonstrate it. Euclid teaches the elements synthetically ; he discovered them by analysis. Now, if we suppose that Pascal, in the scientific meetings at his father's house, had overheard mention of the fact that the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles, and endeavoured to discover the proof of this theorem, the story ceases to be incredible, or even very remarkable. If we consider the astonishing acuteness and vigor of his mind, as subsequently displayed in other ways, it seems quite probable, that he succeeded in inscribing a triangle in a circle, and in ascertaining that an angle at the centre is twice as great as one at the circumference standing upon the same arc, whence the passage to the truth he was seeking to demonstrate is obvious. He may have found out more or less than this ; the account on which we rely being quite indefinite as to the particulars of his achievement. The only thing really marvellous about it is, that a boy twelve years of age, without advice or instigation, should have troubled himself at all about the matter.

His aptitude for mathematical investigations soon appeared in a manner that admits no doubt nor cavil. He now took an active share in the discussions that were held by his father with his scientific associates, and when he was but sixteen years old, he composed a short treatise on conic sections, which was considered as a prodigy of genius. It was published in 1640, and astonished Descartes himself, who persisted in maintaining that it was the work of Pascal's instructors, as he could not believe it was the production of a child. But the progress of his studies was now interrupted by domestic misfortunes. His father incurred the resentment of Richelieu, by offering some opposition to an arbitrary plan for cutting short the income attached to the Hôtel de Ville. An order was made out for committing him to the Bastille ; but obtaining seasonable notice of it, he fled from Paris, and concealed himself in his native province of Auvergne. A singular circumstance aided the talents and filial piety of his children, to which he was at last indebted for restoration from exile. The cardinal, it is well known, had a passion for dramatic performances, and even wrote a

play himself, which was quite bad enough to be worthy of a prime-minister. He took a fancy about this time, that a trag-i-comedy by Scudéri, called “*L’Amour Tyrannique*,” should be represented in his presence by a party of young girls. The Duchess d’Aiguillon, who had charge of the affair, selected Jacqueline Pascal, then about thirteen years old, the younger sister of Blaise, to be one of the performers. The permission of the elder sister, afterwards Madame Perrier, who was the head of the family during the absence of the father, was asked ; but she coldly answered, that they did not consider themselves under any great obligation at that time to please the cardinal. The duchess persisted in her request, and hinted that the pardon of the father might reward them for compliance. They yielded to this suggestion, and the representation took place on the 3d of April, 1639. Jacqueline acted her part like a little fairy, and her grace and spirit quite captivated the spectators, and excited all the good feelings of Richelieu. It had been arranged, that the little actress should approach the minister at the close of the piece, and recite some verses pleading for the restoration of her father. She did so with a degree of simplicity and earnestness that delighted the cardinal, who embraced her as soon as she had finished, and exclaimed, “Yes, my child, I grant all that you ask for ; write to your father, that he may immediately return with safety.” The kind duchess then spoke with strong commendation of the merits of the family, and added, pointing to Blaise, who was standing near, “There is the son, who is but fifteen years old, and is already a distinguished mathematician.”

The elder Pascal returned to Paris, and was received with great kindness by Richelieu, who soon afterwards appointed him to an honorable and lucrative office in the government of Rouen. He removed his family to that city, and the numerous accounts and calculations that were necessary in his official business were confided to his son. Weary of the prolix and monotonous processes of arithmetic, the young man endeavoured to invent some mechanical means of executing the work. After two years of intense application, he produced the celebrated arithmetical machine which bears his name. It was a marvellous effort for a boy of nineteen. Leibnitz speaks of it with admiration, and made some attempts to improve it ; and in our own day, the magnificent

project of Mr. Babbage, which seems fated never to be anything more than a project, is a mere revival and amplification of the ingenious contrivance of the young Frenchman. Pascal's machine consists of a kind of framework, supporting several parallel bars, which turn on their axes, each one having two series of numbers inscribed upon it. A combination of wheels and pinions behind directs the revolution of these bars, and after the machine is set for a particular process, the numbers forming the result appear through the opening in the face of the instrument. The complexity of the work prevents us from giving a more detailed description of it. It is enough to say, that it executes all the lower processes of arithmetic with quickness and certainty, and performs some of the more complex and difficult operations. The arithmetical triangle, invented by Pascal in 1654, is a natural complement to this machine. It gives the coefficients of a binomial raised to any power denoted by an integer, so that it is in part an anticipation of Newton's beautiful theorem. It was applied, also, to the theories of combinations and probabilities, facilitating the calculations in each, and indicating certain results in them not before known.

Pascal was proud of these inventions, and with good reason, considering their fertility and the originality of the ideas on which they rest. He says, that the operation of his machine resembles, far more than the instinct of animals, the workings of the human intellect. In 1650, he sent one of the instruments to Queen Christina of Sweden, with a letter which is a perfect masterpiece of tact and delicacy in complimentary address, and shows that the writer was not more a man of science than an accomplished French gentleman. But the cost of the machine, and its liability to get out of repair, prevented it from coming into extensive use ; and the invention of logarithms renders all contrivances of this class in a great degree unnecessary. In speaking of the mechanical skill of Pascal, his biographers uniformly attribute to him the invention of the wheel sedan-chair and the truck, though it is difficult to believe that these simple instruments were not in use long before his time. He probably made some marked improvements in the common mode of constructing them. The intense and continued exercise of his mind, during two years, upon his arithmetical contrivance proved a permanent injury to his physical constitution,

which was naturally frail and sensitive ; and ever after this period he suffered under the complication of maladies which finally caused his death.

It would be tedious to dwell upon the history of Pascal's discoveries in mathematical science. They were conspicuous and important enough to attract the attention and envy of Descartes, who seemed to arrogate to himself at this period the whole province of pure mathematics as his particular domain. The researches upon the theory of the cycloid have been already mentioned ; inferior as they are to the results since obtained so easily by the use of the infinitesimal calculus, they must be regarded as almost miraculous achievements of the geometry of Pascal's time. The calculation of chances, various problems in which are so complex and far-reaching as to tax the utmost resources of the improved science of our own day, owes its earliest development, and the establishment of some of its most important principles, to the genius of this youthful mathematician. Huygens, to whom the praise of originating the true theory of games of chance is sometimes awarded, frankly avows, in the preface to his work on this subject, that the invention does not belong to him, as " all these questions have already been discussed by the greatest geometers of France." In truth, the work of Huygens appeared in 1657, while the solutions of Pascal were well known in 1654, when he was but thirty-one years of age. The subject was proposed to him by a celebrated gamester, who wished to know in what proportions the stake should be divided between two players, if they agreed to separate without finishing the game. Pascal solved the problem in its most general form, so as to divide the sum equitably among any number of players who might be engaged. Roberval and Fermat, two of the most distinguished mathematicians in France, attempted to answer these questions at the same time ; the former failed entirely ; the latter succeeded by applying the theory of combinations. Pascal, who had solved the problem by another method, believed at first that the solution by Fermat was not correct, although the result agreed with his own ; but on further examination he retracted this opinion, and acknowledged that the process was equally accurate and elegant.

Passing over Pascal's other mathematical labors, though many of them are of considerable note, we come to his con-

tributions to physical science, which afford still more remarkable proofs of the premature vigor of his intellect. His celebrated experiments upon the weight of the atmosphere put the seal of demonstration upon one of the greatest discoveries of modern times. Torricelli suspected that the ascent of water in a common pump, which had hitherto been attributed to nature's repugnance to a vacuum, was really due to the weight of a column of air, which balanced the column of fluid. The workmen of the Duke of Florence had informed him, that the pump would not act for a height of more than thirty-three feet. If the weight of the atmosphere, then, would support a column of water thirty-three feet high, it would balance a much heavier fluid only at a much lower elevation. Torricelli took a glass tube about three feet long, sealed at one end, and having filled it with quicksilver, he plunged the open end into a cup full of the same fluid, and found that the mercury in the tube, after some oscillations, remained at the height of about thirty inches above the surface of the mercury in the cup. Mercury is about thirteen times heavier than water, and thirty inches is about the thirteenth part of thirty-three feet. In other words, the power which supported the two fluids, whatever it might be, was constant in respect to weight, since the elevation of the two fluids was inversely proportional to their weight. Torricelli believed, that this power was the pressure of the air, or that a column of air as high as the earth's atmosphere was as heavy as thirty inches of mercury, or as thirty-three feet of water. But he could not prove this ; his supposition, it is true, explained the facts ; but it did not exclude other hypotheses which might be framed to account for the same phenomena. The question remained open, then, till, in the language of Bacon, an *experimentum crucis* could be devised, which should eliminate the false theories, and show that the weight of the atmosphere was *the only possible* cause of the phenomenon. This experiment was at last devised and executed by Pascal, who thereby put the question for ever at rest.

The experiment of Torricelli, which was, in truth, the invention of the barometer, was made in 1645. Its result had been predicted by Descartes ; but the explanation offered by both these philosophers had at first but small success among the learned. The doctrine of the repugnance

of nature to a vacuum had been too long established to give way readily to a truth which was not as yet demonstrated. The supposition was gravely made, that some *subtile matter*, or *ether*, evaporated from the surface of the water or the mercury, and filled the apparent void in the top of the tube. Pascal at once adopted the views of Torricelli and Descartes, and repeated the experiments of the former in 1646, with some variations, which still further discredited the old doctrine. He used tubes of great length, and thus proved that nature did not dread a great vacuum any more than a small one. He employed a tube bent in the form of the letter U, and having invented an apparatus for admitting at intervals small quantities of air into the top of one of the branches, he found that the mercury descended there just as fast as the air was admitted, while it remained stationary in the other branch. The results of these experiments, and the arguments founded upon them, he published in 1647, in a little book, entitled "New Experiments respecting a Vacuum." Noel, a Jesuit, who was then rector of the College of Paris, published a severe criticism upon this work, and Pascal replied in a sarcastic and argumentative way, showing the power in controversy which was afterwards more fully developed in the "Provincial Letters."

But Pascal saw with pain, that not one of the tests or arguments hitherto employed was absolutely decisive of the point at issue. After long and painful reflection upon the subject, he at last matured the idea of an experiment, which would leave no room for cavil, and would establish the true doctrine irrevocably. If the air be a weighty fluid, each horizontal stratum of it must be pressed by the accumulated weight of all the superincumbent strata, and the pressure must therefore diminish as we rise above the surface of the earth. Now, if it be the pressure of the air which sustains the column of fluid, let the instrument be carried to a considerable height in the atmosphere, and the mercury must fall to a lower point in the tube. In order that the difference in the height of the mercury might be very perceptible, and leave no pretext to doubt its reality, it was necessary to raise the tube very high in the air. The mountain called the Puy-de-Dôme, which is in the neighbourhood of Clermont, and is about three thousand feet high, offered a suitable means for accomplishing this object. On the 15th of

November, 1647, Pascal communicated his project to his brother-in-law, M. Perier, who was about to visit Clermont, and charged him to make the trial as soon as he arrived there. Various circumstances delayed the execution of the plan ; but it was tried at last, with all possible exactness, on the 19th of September, 1648, and all the phenomena were observed which Pascal had predicted. The mercury began to descend in the tube as they climbed the mountain's side, and on the summit it was more than three inches lower than it had been at the base. As they descended, the column rose again, till they reached the plain, where it had the same elevation as at first. In another tube, which had been observed meanwhile on the plain, no alteration had taken place. Pascal made similar experiments at Paris, by means of the very lofty tower of St. Jacques-la-Boucherie, and obtained corresponding results.

Herschel, quoted with approbation by Mr. Hallam, calls this famous experiment “*a crucial instance*, one of the first, if not the very first, on record in physics.” Indeed, the whole history of Pascal's investigations respecting the pressure of the atmosphere is such a striking and beautiful illustration of the Baconian system, that we must believe he had studied the “*Novum Organum*,” an edition of which was printed in Holland in 1645, just a year before Pascal began his work. His final success appears the more remarkable, when we consider that he was not yet twenty-five years old. Descartes, with his usual selfishness and arrogance, claimed the merit of this experiment for himself, by affirming, in a letter written in 1649, that he had suggested it to Pascal two years before. This assertion was communicated to the latter, who disdained to take any direct notice of it ; but in a historical account of the matter, which he wrote in 1651, he says, without mentioning Descartes, “ I boldly declare that this experiment is of my own invention ; and I say, moreover, that the increase of knowledge which it has occasioned is due entirely to me.” If we reflect on the severe integrity of Pascal's conduct, the rigid conscientiousness which pervaded his character, and the frank and manly way in which he acknowledges the merit due to others, evinced particularly by his language respecting Torricelli, it seems impossible to discredit this distinct assertion. “ The question is one of those,” says Playfair, “ where a man's conduct in a

particular case can only be rightly interpreted from his general character and behaviour." It is notorious, that Descartes was far from being frank and candid in his intercourse with others. He contrives to give a history of the origin of the telescope without mentioning Galileo ; he says nothing of the discoveries of Kepler, though so nearly connected with his own ; and his conduct towards Snellius subjects his integrity to the heaviest imputations. " The truth is," says Playfair, " that he appears throughout a jealous and suspicious man, always inclined to depress or conceal the merit of others." Surely, when a question of veracity arises between two such persons as Pascal and Descartes, we cannot doubt for a moment which is to be believed.

The experiments upon the pressure of the atmosphere naturally led Pascal to some more general inquiries respecting the equilibrium of fluids. He wrote two treatises upon this subject and upon the weight of the air, which were finished in 1653, though they were not published till after his death. They contain the record of some ingenious experiments, and many general views, which were considerably in advance of the science of his time. He remarks, that the air is a compressible and elastic fluid, and cites, as a proof of this, a trial which he had caused to be made on the Puy-de-Dôme, where a balloon partly filled with air at the base, on being carried to the summit, was entirely distended ; it shrunk again as the party descended the mountains, and regained its former volume at the foot. He made some observations, also, on the changes to which the column of mercury is exposed, while kept at the same place, proceeding from the variations of the weather. He did not, indeed, divine all the barometrical uses of this instrument, though he seems to have accomplished more in this way than any one of his contemporaries.

If we except the mathematical inquiry respecting the cycloid, which was taken up rather as a diversion during his last illness, it may be said, that Pascal's scientific labors terminated when he had attained the age of thirty. It is not surprising, then, that their results should hardly appear so numerous and brilliant as those obtained by one or two of his illustrious contemporaries in an age which was the most remarkable, perhaps, for the progress of science and the development of the human mind, of any in the

history of the world. But as indications of what he might have done in a longer period, or under more favorable circumstances, — as evidence of the vast power and fertility of his youthful intellect, they will never cease to command the wonder and admiration of mankind. If his life had been protracted to the ordinary limit, if suffering and disease had not perpetually discouraged him, if his ambition had been greater, or if it had not been so early checked and turned into a different channel, we can hardly doubt that he would have stood among the foremost of the great promoters of science in modern times.

The father of Pascal died in 1651 ; and two years afterwards, his sister Jacqueline, to whom he was tenderly attached, retired for ever from the world, by uniting herself to the company of pious recluses at Port Royal. Anxious to show the fervor of her religious faith, and her grateful feelings towards the brother who had first directed her own steps to the path of peace, she sought to win him also from the world, by causing him to renounce his former studies, and to seek only for the things of heaven. Various circumstances aided the execution of this pious scheme. An attack of paralysis, several years before, had nearly deprived him of the use of his legs, and diseases of the nervous system and the stomach had now brought him to the verge of the grave. There was no course left for him but to abandon his engrossing labors, at least for a season, to turn his thoughts to other subjects, and patiently to await either the partial restoration of his health, or a final release from earthly suffering. During the tedious hours of illness, his mind reverted to the religious counsels he had received in his youth. His father had carefully sown in his mind the seeds of piety and Christian faith. These had remained quiet, though not wholly inoperative, during his early manhood, while the whole force of his intellect was directed to scientific pursuits. But they sprang up with a most luxuriant growth, when these pursuits were forcibly interrupted for a time by physical suffering. The objects for which he had hitherto labored so strenuously now lost all value in his eyes. The memory of youthful triumphs was no longer pleasant ; the reputation he had already gained, the hopes of still greater distinction which he had once cherished, were now ranked among the vain joys and aspirations of a world which seemed to be

fading from his sight, as another one of more glorious promise opened to his view from beyond the grave. He resolved to mortify his ambition and love of science, to quench even the natural spark of family affection, to deny himself the ordinary comforts of life, and to devote his whole soul to the contemplation of God and a future life. He became a recluse, an ascetic, an enthusiast ; we will not say a fanatic, for his cruelties were lavished only on himself. The end was not yet ; a few more years remained to him, during which his achievements in defence of persecuted innocence and religious truth were destined to surpass in splendor his early contributions to the cause of human learning.

During the extremity of bodily pain, this change of purpose wrought so powerfully on his mind, that at one time he was probably on the brink of insanity. As he slowly and imperfectly recovered, the intensity of feeling subsided in some degree, but was revived and made permanent by the consequences of an accident. As he was crossing the Pont de Neuilly in a carriage, the horses became restive and unmanageable, and at a point where there was no railing to the bridge, they leaped into the river. Fortunately, the traces broke, and the carriage stopped on the brink ; but the frail system of Pascal received a shock so violent, that he fainted, and was with great difficulty restored to consciousness. The alarm and the jar of the head which were thus caused had a sensible effect on his excited imagination, and he became subject to a kind of false sensation not uncommon in certain forms of mental disease. He saw a frightful precipice yawning continually at his side, and though his reason convinced him that it was unreal, he could not resist the terror which it occasioned. We find indistinct notices of a sort of vision, or ecstasy, which he had soon afterwards, and which was attributed to the same cause. As a memorial of this vision, he preserved for a long time a paper on which were written the day and the hour when it occurred, and some detached pious meditations ; and this paper he constantly carried about with him, as if it were an amulet, concealed within the lining of his dress. It is difficult to say, whether this was an effect of partial insanity, or of some superstitious idea which he had connected with the vision. At any rate, he considered the accident on the bridge as a warning given to him by Heaven to break off all human engagements, and to live in

future for God alone. It is painful to read the minute account given by his sister of the privations and sufferings imposed upon himself by this unhappy enthusiast, during the remainder of his life. Great as these austerities were, they never altered the sweetness of his disposition, nor impaired the astonishing vigor and acuteness of his intellect, whenever he had occasion to use his pen in the cause of truth.

Pascal now became an intimate friend of the most distinguished Port Royalists, and though he never formally united himself to their society, he was accustomed to make them long visits, and was led to espouse their doctrines, and to take an active share in the controversies in which they were then engaged. Among the more eminent of their number, to whom he became particularly attached, — similarity in taste, opinion, and ardor of devotional feeling being the bond of union between them, — were Arnauld, Nicole, De Saci, and Lancelot. Of the remarkable association, of which these men were the brightest ornaments, and which was at once the glory and the shame of France during the seventeenth century, our limits will not permit us to speak at length ; but some notice of it is necessary, in order to make intelligible the history of the bitter controversy it waged with the Jesuits, when the genius of Pascal came to its rescue at the hour of its greatest need, and delayed for many years its destruction by the hands of its powerful and bitter antagonists.

The effects of the Reformation were hardly more conspicuous upon the feelings and conduct of those who separated from the church of Rome, than of those who remained within its pale. Fiercely assaulted from all quarters, the ancient Mother found greater resources in her own bosom than she had ever counted upon in her hour of prosperity. Opposition developed her strength ; shame and rivalry purified her morals and reduced the number of her corruptions ; and the piety of many of her faithful children kindled into a brighter and purer flame, as they looked round for means of defence against the enthusiastic and unrelenting Reformers. The forces thus engendered, created by various causes, and advancing at times in opposite directions, often came in contact with each other, and excited dissensions in her own bosom ; but they all strengthened her hands against the common foe. Having this great advantage over the Reformers, of being all subject to one head, to whom they professed im-

plicit obedience, the Catholics profited by these dissensions, from the increase of zeal and effort which they occasioned ; while the controversy was stayed by the papal power, when it had gone so far as to threaten the internal security of the Church. The able and wary pontiffs, whom the exigency of the times called to the papal chair, as successors to the profligate Alexander and the luxurious Leo, managed these disputes with admirable discretion, though with less regard to consistency and purity of doctrine than to the protection of the common cause against its avowed enemies. They temporized between the opposing parties, delaying as much as possible the absolute decision of the matter, and finally caused that scale to preponderate on which the temporal interests of the Church seemed most intimately to depend. The fanaticism of a Spanish soldier, turned monk, created the order of the Jesuits, the most effective militia ever organized for the purposes of ecclesiastical warfare ; resolute, cunning, and unscrupulous, they sacrificed the cause of Christian faith and morals to the necessities of the combat in which they were engaged. Fervor of devotional feeling, kindled by the exciting religious controversies which then agitated Europe, gave birth, among other sects, to that of the Port Royalists, or Jansenists, of France, composed of persons who still adhered with unflinching fidelity to the see of Rome, though in practice, and in many points of doctrine, they were more nearly allied to some parties among the Reformers. Two associations, animated by principles differing so widely from each other as those of the Jesuits and the Jansenists, could not long coexist in harmony within the same pale. Disputes on points of faith were carried on with bitter recriminations ; and the contest proceeded so far, that the entire destruction of one or the other party at last became inevitable. Rome temporized as usual, but was obliged to act at last ; and the suppression of the monastery of Port Royal, and the persecution of the Jansenists, showed how highly she valued the unscrupulous services of the followers of Loyola.

The controversy, so far as it was exclusively doctrinal, turned on the dark problems of predestination, free will, and saving grace, which have been almost constantly agitated in the Church during its whole history, and are still as far from a satisfactory solution as ever. The pious enthusiasm of the Jansenists, leading them to confess their utter unworthiness

in the sight of God, and their total incapacity to execute the divine commands, caused them to accept in all its severity the gloomy doctrine of St. Augustine. They held, that the grace of God is free and irresistible ; it is conferred upon the elect, not in consideration of their own merits, but by arbitrary appointment ; they cannot obtain it by their own acts, nor resist its effects whenever it is vouchsafed to them. Man is born with so strong an inclination to sin, that, without extraordinary aid from the Deity, he cannot perform a pious act. The human will is absolutely passive ; so that a good action, even after conversion, cannot be ascribed in any proper sense to the human agent, but is due to the operation of the Spirit. It is God that worketh in us, both to will and to do ; and there has been no free will for the creature since Adam's time, except to do evil. It is not denied, that all men may be converted, *if they wish* for conversion ; but they never can wish for it, unless the grace of God is imparted to them for that end.

Appalling as this doctrine seems, when nakedly stated, it had belonged to the faith of the Christian world at least since the time of Augustine. The church of Rome had held it in reverence for the authority of that father ; and the early Reformers, Luther and Calvin especially, state it without reserve, and engage in its defence with the utmost warmth. The former declares, that good and evil are attributable to God alone ; man commits sin from the necessary inclination of his will, which is enslaved to wickedness, being predetermined to it by divine power ; and when he inclines to good, he only follows the irresistible impulse of grace, which pushes him onward like an inanimate body, his own agency having no share whatever in the movement. This is the doctrine, certainly, of men who have made entire submission of their reason to their faith, and as such it was accepted and defended by the Jansenists, and their eloquent champion, Pascal. It is a part of that sacrifice which the penitent convert makes to the cause of religious truth, to humble the pride of his own intellect, and, in all the enthusiasm of self-abasement, to accept propositions as dark as these without question or reserve.

The Jesuits wished to impose no such terrible burden on their converts. Their object was to retain waverers in the Church, and to allure heretics again into its bosom, by im-

posing upon them no austerities of conduct, and no stumbling-blocks of doctrine. Lax and unscrupulous in the use of means, they preached a convenient system of morals, and an easy creed, to their converts. They aimed rather to justify sin than to command holiness ; for they looked only to the external interests of the Church, which was already sure of the saints, and now stood in need, as they thought, of the services of the sinners. More subtle and ingenious than profound, they contrived intermediate systems wherewith to reconcile their own loose doctrines with the often repeated declarations of the Church and the teachings of the fathers. The treatise of the Spanish Jesuit, Molina, published in 1588, on the agreement between divine grace and human free-will, may be considered as the most general exposition of their belief on this thorny subject. According to this theory, the Deity foreknows not only every event which will actually take place, but also what would have happened under certain conditions, that in fact are never fulfilled. The necessary aid of the Spirit is imparted to those only who would have made good use of the freedom of the will, if they had possessed it. Consequently, men act from necessity ; but also act precisely as they would have done, had they been free. Divine grace is freely imparted to those who do not, indeed, merit it, but whose characters show a certain congruousness or fitness for its reception. This is the celebrated system of the “intermediate science,” or the foresight of “contingent futures,” as well as of actual events ; and of “congruousness,” instead of *merit*, or *arbitrary appointment*, which is made the law of distribution of the divine assistance. It is evidently an ingenious attempt to inculcate the doctrine of Pelagius, without expressly contradicting the words of Augustine. The doctrine of predestination is retained ; but all events, so far as man is concerned, take place exactly as if they were altogether contingent, or dependent only on the free action of the human will. The just are irresistibly inclined to holiness by the action of divine grace ; but if a different appointment of Providence had left them entirely at liberty, they would have followed precisely the same course.

The Dominicans, who were ardent followers of Thomas Aquinas, and therefore held to the doctrines of predestination and efficacious grace without mitigation or reserve, stoutly

opposed this theory of the Jesuits, and very nearly succeeded in procuring its condemnation at Rome. But the intrigues of the latter caused the sentence to be postponed, and, while it was still under deliberation, the death of Clement the Eighth, and the numerous engagements of his successor, Paul the Fifth, caused so much delay, that the controversy passed out of notice and was forgotten. It is probable, that the dispute between these two orders would have gone much further, if the attention of both had not been diverted by their common hostility towards the Port Royalists, which finally caused a hollow peace to be concluded between them. Molinism continued to be taught by the Jesuits, and the Dominicans winked at what they could not approve.

In 1639, Jansenius, Bishop of Ypres, died just as he had completed his work called the “*Augustinus*,” which had been the labor of his life, and which contained a kind of summary of the doctrines of Augustine respecting predestination and divine grace. It was published the year after his death; and, as it was a heavy and ill-written book, it would probably have attracted little notice, if accident had not rendered it the touchstone of dispute in the memorable controversy between the Port Royalists and the Jesuits. St. Cyran, the leader of the former party, had been the intimate friend of Jansenius, and now strongly recommended his work, as containing the whole secret of the doctrine of predestination. His associates, the pious and learned recluses of Port Royal des Champs, followed in his track, and defended the opinions of the Bishop of Ypres with so much ardor, that they were soon distinguished by the name of Jansenists. The Jesuits were enraged to find their own system of theology falling out of repute, while a dark shade was cast upon the character of their order by the superior reputation of their antagonists for sanctity of life and purity of doctrine. Not daring to controvert openly the opinions of Augustine, they vehemently assailed the work of Jansenius, as containing dangerous and heretical doctrine. Their outcries and artifices would probably have had little effect, if the Jansenists had not unluckily incurred the hatred both of Richelieu and Mazarin; the former imprisoned St. Cyran at Vincennes, and the latter openly countenanced the machinations of the Jesuits. Emboldened by such aid, the Jesuits fulminated the most atrocious calumnies against

the members of the hated sect, and left no stone unturned to effect their utter ruin. But their success depended upon maintaining the charge of heresy ; for they had to do with men whose abilities and reputation were far greater than their own, and who acquired more public esteem from the very persecution under which they were suffering. Such adversaries as Arnauld, Nicole, Saci, and Pascal were more to be dreaded than simple theologians. They were men of philosophical minds and high literary merit. They had acquired zealous and powerful friends throughout the kingdom, and even at the court, by their talents, their virtues, and the signal services which they had rendered to literature and science. But in that age and country, the single charge of heresy was enough to effect their destruction.

In 1649, Father Cornet, Syndic of the Faculty of the Sorbonne, drew up five propositions on the mysteries of divine grace, which he denounced, as opinions drawn from the work of Jansenius by Arnauld and his followers. After a long contest at Rome, Innocent the Tenth finally decided that the propositions were heretical ; and that one of them especially, which declared that Jesus Christ had not died for all men, was false, rash, and scandalous ; and if understood to mean, that the Saviour had died for the elect alone, it was impious and blasphemous. But he said nothing about the question, whether these doctrines were actually contained in the “*Augustinus*.” The Jansenists affirmed, that they could not be found there, and though they bowed with perfect submission to the authority of the Holy See, and admitted the five propositions to be heretical in the sense which was attached to them, they refused to condemn the dogma of efficacious grace which is essential for an act of piety, or to reject the authority of St. Augustine, which had always been revered in the Church. They took a distinction between the pope’s right to judge of points of doctrine, and his authority to settle questions of fact ; the former they admitted to the fullest extent, while they boldly denied the latter. Questions of this class, they said, can be determined only by the senses. Pascal always speaks with entire reverence of the authority of the Church, as represented by the supreme pontiff, in matters of faith ; but respecting matters of fact, he holds the following bold language.

“ It was in vain,” he says, addressing the Jesuits, “ that you

obtained a decree from Rome against Galileo, which condemned his opinion respecting the movement of the earth. *That* will never prove that it stands still ; and if there is a series of constant observations to show that it turns on its axis, all the men in the world will never prevent it from turning, nor prevent themselves from turning along with it. Do not imagine, either, that the letters of Pope Zachariah, excommunicating St. Virgilius, because he maintained the existence of the antipodes, have annihilated this new world ; and although he declared this opinion was a dangerous error, the King of Spain did well in believing Christopher Columbus, who had returned from this new world, rather than the opinion of the pope, who had never been there ; and the Church gained a great advantage thereby, as a knowledge of the gospel was thus imparted to many nations, who would otherwise have perished in their sins." — *Lettres Provinciales*, pp. 348, 349.

All the theologians in France were now in arms upon the apparently simple question, whether the five propositions, admitted on all hands to be heretical, were really contained in the work of Jansenius, or not. Arnauld and his followers confidently asked to have them pointed out ; the Jesuits accumulated all sorts of authorities, except the book itself, to prove that they were contained in it. The truth was, every body knew that the substance, but not the identical words, of the five propositions were to be found in the book ; but the Jesuits dared not cite the passages confirmatory of this view, for then their opponents would have obtained an easy triumph, by showing that Jansenius had used Augustine's own words, and Rome was by no means prepared to repudiate the high authority of that father, "the doctor of grace." The Jesuits charged their antagonists with upholding Calvinism, and were themselves accused, in turn, of favoring Pelagianism. It was a pitiable thing, as D'Alembert says, to see the time and talents of the ablest men in the kingdom wasted on fantastic and interminable discussions about free will and divine grace, and on the important question, whether five unintelligible propositions were contained in a stupid book which nobody ever thought of reading. Persecuted, imprisoned, exiled on account of these vain disputes, and continually occupied in defending such a futile cause, how many years in their lives have philosophy and letters to mourn over as utterly wasted !

Among those who combated for Jansenius, no one so

much distinguished himself for zeal and vehemence as Arnauld. Inflexible, ardent, and indefatigable, he had all the qualities requisite for being the successful leader of a sect. In 1655, a priest of St. Sulpice refused absolution to the Duke de Liancourt, because he was a friend of the Port Royalists, and allowed his grandchild to be a pupil in their seminary. Arnauld took fire at this insult, and published two very severe letters, commenting on the bigotry and injustice evinced by this act. Among other offensive things, he said he had read the work of Jansenius, and could not find the heretical propositions in it ; and that the gospel “ offers us, in the case of St. Peter, the example of a just man, to whom the divine grace, without which nothing can be effected, was wanting, on an occasion when no one can say that he did not sin.” For publishing these assertions, he was immediately arraigned before the Sorbonne as a contumacious heretic. The discussion excited great interest, for it was regarded as a decisive trial of strength between the two parties. The hall of the Sorbonne was crowded, as the Jesuits and their opponents mustered all their forces for the encounter ; and the former, especially, brought in so many mendicant monks, as to give occasion for a sarcastic remark by Pascal, that it was more easy for them to find monks than arguments. The condemnation of Arnauld was inevitable ; for the Jesuits had strengthened themselves by an alliance with the Dominicans and other orders, wrecks of the Middle Ages, whom a secret instinct brought together as opponents of the new order of things. The minority was composed in great part of the secular clergy. Sentence was passed in January, 1656, when the two assertions cited above were not only condemned as heretical, but Arnauld himself was for ever excluded from his seat in the faculty of theology.

The triumph of the Jesuits seemed complete ; but their joy was at once checked and turned into dismay by the sudden appearance in the opposite ranks of a new champion, far more formidable than any whom they had hitherto encountered. Just before sentence was passed, appeared the first of Pascal’s “ Provincial Letters,” as they are usually called, though the more proper title is, “ Letters written by Louis de Montalte to one of his Friends in the Country.” The others, eighteen in number, were published successively, at intervals of several weeks’ duration, for more than a

year and a half. Never was more seasonable and effectual aid brought to the rescue of a sinking cause. These masterpieces of style and argument, of wit and eloquence, did more to ruin the name and the cause of the Jesuits, than all the discussions that had been urged in the schools of theology, and all the enemies they had provoked among the reigning powers of Europe. Eminently popular and intelligible in style, abounding with the happiest flashes of pleasantry and fancy, passing with ease and grace from the keenest ridicule to the loftiest invective, they were read and almost committed to memory by all classes of men, while the heavy and abusive answers to them passed unnoticed, and were soon forgotten. They provoked the unwilling praise even of Voltaire, who said that the earlier letters had more wit than the best comedies of Molière, and the later ones more sublimity than the finest compositions of Bossuet. The same excellent judge attributes to them the fixation of the French language, and says, that, after the lapse of more than a century, not a word or phrase employed in them had become obsolete. The clearness and precision with which the points at issue are explained, and the tone of severe morality and fervent piety which pervades these admirable letters, made them as persuasive and convincing as they were delightful. The Jesuits found themselves exposed to the ridicule and indignation of all Europe, in a publication destined to be as lasting and as widely diffused as the language in which it was written. They had no writers among their number capable of averting or returning this terrible blow ; for it was aptly said of them, that at all times “ their penknives were more to be dreaded than their pens.” The Jesuit Annat remarked, that, for an answer to the first fifteen letters, he had only to repeat fifteen times over, that the writer of them was a Jansenist.

In the first three letters, Pascal examines the points of dispute, which were involved in the trial of Arnauld. He exposes with great wit and severity the fraudulent alliance between the Jesuits and the Dominicans against the Jansenists, in which the two contracting parties covered up their fundamental differences of opinion by an abuse of language, using phrases which either had no meaning at all, or involved the grossest contradictions. The Dominicans had always maintained the doctrine of “ efficacious grace ” necessary for any good action, and that human liberty does not consist in

indifference, but is compatible with a certain kind of necessity which springs from the irresistible power of divine grace. The Jesuits, who were followers of Molina, denied both these dogmas, and affirmed the existence of "sufficient grace," and "immediate power" to do good or to abstain from it, without any extraneous aid. Their allies employed the same phrases, but attached a different meaning to them, understanding thereby, that the powers spoken of were of no effect without the additional aid of the Spirit. They covenanted to use these technicalities without any reference to the sense which the Molinists attached to them, on condition that the Jesuits would not oblige them to explain their whole meaning, and would continue to declare that the doctrine of the Thomists was orthodox. Here was fine scope for the sarcastic commentary of Pascal on the dogma of "sufficient grace," which did not suffice for the performance of any pious act, and of "immediate power," which was of no avail except by the special assistance of the Deity. The irony with which he exposes these gross terrors is keen but tempered, and flashes out into eloquent indignation only at the close, when he comes to speak of the great purpose of this unholy compact, which was to effect the condemnation of the Jansenists.

By adopting the epistolary form of composition, which admits great freedom of transition and colloquial piquancy of style, and by throwing most of the argument into the garb of dialogue, Pascal contrived to render even this abstruse and perplexed controversy intelligible and pleasant to all classes of readers. He had less difficulty with the remainder of his task, which was to expose the false morality of the Jesuit casuists. From writers of established reputation among them, such as Escobar, Busenbaum, Bauny, and others, he has accumulated a long list of scandalous decisions, and has dwelt upon them with so much wit and severity, that he has rendered the very name of Jesuitism a synonyme for chicane, deception, and falsehood. It is a curious corroboration of this fact, that the popularity of his Letters in France introduced the word *escobarder*, meaning "to prevaricate, or shuffle," into common use in the language. Pascal is often accused, though without reason, of treating the Jesuits unfairly, by holding the whole society responsible for the unauthorized doctrines of individual mem-

bers. He cites those works only which were of high repute among them, which were adopted by them as guides in the confessional chair, and had passed through many editions. Escobar's treatise on Moral Theology, which Pascal quotes most frequently, went through forty editions, and more than fifty editions were published of the casuistical writings of Bussenbaum. The Jesuits, also, were too proud and resolute, too firmly attached to each other and to the reputation of the society as a whole, to censure or repudiate works which they had once sanctioned. They yielded nothing, they disavowed nothing, but perished in the attempt to defend all. They accused their assailant of making unfair quotations, but did not deny that the writers whom he cited were authoritative. Pascal replied, that he had read Escobar twice through, and had not cited a passage from the other authors, without seeing it in the book, and carefully examining the context.

In truth, the ethical doctrines which he reprobates were interwoven with the fundamental principles of the society, and were a necessary consequence of the position which the Jesuits had assumed, and the mission which they had undertaken to accomplish. Their society was the last great instrument of the old papal dominion. It came into the world too late for its work ; for the great schism had taken place, and no array of forces, however well disciplined, could prevent the fatal consequences of such a rent in the Church. They undertook to reverse the declaration of the Saviour, that the children of this world are, in their generation, wiser than the children of light. They borrowed the weapons of the devil to serve heaven with, and aimed to subjugate the world by conforming themselves to its spirit. When they could not face the nobler instincts of humanity, they made skilful and unhesitating use of all the baser appetites and passions, and became the ready tools and apologists of those who wished to compromise between conscience and convenience. They preached a mitigated doctrine of religion and morals, and thereby made themselves acceptable at court, and gained the private ear of the monarchs, of whom they were the favorite confessors. The Jesuits Annat, Le Tellier, and La Chaise governed France by granting absolution on easy terms to the sins of Louis the Fourteenth ; the gratitude of the king being proportioned to the number of his offences, and to the indulgence with which they were consid-

ered. Their precepts formed the monstrous anomaly of his religious character,—a compound of bigoted devotion and moral turpitude. The Jesuits were too cunning to profit in their own persons by the laxity of the principles which they preached to others. Strange as it may seem, they were often irreproachable, and even austere, in their private conduct. This contradiction occasioned the sarcastic remark, that they purchased heaven very dearly for themselves, but sold it at a very cheap bargain to their converts.

Acute and subtile in reasoning, they reduced their false morality to a system, and framed consistent rules for their own guidance in the practices of confession and absolution. They defined sin to be a wilful violation of the law of God, and measured its enormity by the penitent's consciousness of its true character, and by his free consent to its commission. Strong temptation and temporary forgetfulness of the divine command palliated the offence, by hiding its sinful nature from the view of the transgressor. Since hardly any one loves sin *as such*, or for its own sake, a sufficient mantle is hereby provided to cover the greatest enormities. Habit, or even bad example, which increases the force of temptation, partially excuses the act ; that which is not wantonly or gratuitously committed is not to be severely judged. Other grounds of pardon were also recognized. One of the most abominable of these is the doctrine of mental reservations, which allows one to make a promise coupled with a secret condition in his own mind, which he knows is not understood by the person to whom the promise is given. A man may say what is true in the meaning that he attaches to it, though he is aware that it will be interpreted in a different sense. Even perjury is allowable, if one only swears outwardly, without inwardly intending what he professes. Duelling is forbidden ; but if a person is in danger of losing an office, or forfeiting the good opinion of his ruler, by refusing to engage in a duel, he is not to be condemned for fighting ; for then he does not wish to violate the law, but only to preserve his honor or his station.

The doctrine of probability is another striking example of perverted casuistry. In doubtful cases, an individual might disregard the scruples of his own conscience, and follow the authority of a single writer, if one could be found, who maintained that the desired course of conduct was not unlawful.

When there is a conflict of authorities, the opinion upheld by any one of them must be deemed probable, and we are at liberty to select the most indulgent teacher. Moreover, transgression is no longer heinous, if the intention be directed only to the innocent qualities of the act, while its sinful characteristics are put aside and forgotten. In this way, a slight turn of the thoughts was held to exonerate from guilt. Thus, simony is forbidden ; but if a person gives money for a benefice, not in order to bribe the bestower, but to gain a means of more effectually serving the Church of God, he is blameless. A man may kill another who gives him a blow, or even publishes a libel against him, provided he does not act from the spirit of hatred or vengeance, but only with a view to retrieve his injured honor.

These were the detestable maxims of Jesuitical casuistry, maxims deliberately recommended in their books and taught from the confessional chair, which Pascal so happily exposed. By holding them up to public reprobation and contempt, he rendered no less signal service to morality and religion than to the almost desperate fortunes of the Port Royalists. But even the publication of the "Provincial Letters," though it covered the assailants with shame, would not, probably, have sufficed for the protection of the assailed, if a supposed miracle, perhaps the best accredited of its class in modern times, had not taken place, and created a popular belief, of which the Jansenists instantly availed themselves, that Heaven itself was interposing in behalf of the persecuted sect.

Pascal's niece, a girl about eleven years of age, the daughter of Madame Perier, resided as a pupil in the Port Royal nunnery. The poor child had been afflicted for more than three years with a *fistula lacrymalis* in the corner of the left eye. It had affected the bones of the nose and palate, and frightfully disfigured her externally, one side of her face being entirely ulcerated. After the ablest physicians and surgeons of Paris had exhausted their skill upon the case without effect, they determined to make trial of the actual cautery, and the day for this painful operation was fixed. Meanwhile, a collector of relics in the city, named M. de la Potterie, pretended to have gained possession of one of the thorns which had composed the crown that the soldiers platted and put upon our Saviour's head. As Voltaire remarks, by what means such an extraordinary relic was preserved and

transported from Jerusalem to the Faubourg St. Jacques we are not informed. But the populace believed in the Holy Thorn, and the members of the several religious communities vied with each other in their eagerness to have it exhibited at their respective establishments. Among others, the Port Royal nuns requested to see it, and it was carried to them on the 24th of March, 1656. It was placed on a little altar within the grate of the choir, and a procession of the pupils and nuns marched by, singing appropriate hymns, and each in her turn kissing the holy relic. One of the instructors stood near, and could not help shuddering as she saw the disfigured little girl approach. "Recommend yourself to God, my child," she exclaimed, "and touch your diseased eye with the Holy Thorn." The command was obeyed, and the girl instantly felt the assurance, as she afterwards declared, that she was healed. She told one of her young companions of the fact that night, and the next day it was made known to the nuns, who examined the eye, and found the cure was complete. There was no tumor, no exudation of matter, not even a scar.

Three or four days afterwards, Dalencé, one of the surgeons who were engaged to apply the hot iron, came to the house, and asked to see the patient. She was brought to him, but he did not recognize her, and said again that he wished to see the girl whose eye and cheek were ulcerated. "She now stands before you," was the reply. Amazed at such an announcement, he examined the little girl with great care, and could not find any trace of the disease. He then sent for his two associates, who repeated the examination, and declared that the patient was entirely cured. The report of this miracle created great sensation in Paris. Crowds flocked to Port Royal, to behold and admire the Holy Thorn. The queen mother deputed M. Felix, first surgeon of the king, who enjoyed a high reputation for probity and skill, to inquire into the truth of the story. He questioned the nuns and the surgeons, drew up an account of the origin, progress, and end of the disease, attentively examined the girl, and at last declared, in a paper attested by his signature, that neither nature nor art had had any share in the cure, but that it was attributable to God alone. The cry was now universal, that divine power had interposed in behalf of the Jansenists, and their enemies were covered with confusion and dismay.

The severe measures that had been instituted against the Port Royal society were instantly relaxed. The nuns were again allowed to receive their pupils, the illustrious recluses returned to the spot consecrated by their studies and devotions, and even Arnauld came forth from his hiding-place, and gave God thanks. Mademoiselle Perier lived seventy-five years after this event, without any return of the malady. She was still alive when the poet Racine drew up his narrative of the affair, from which we have taken this account.

The generation which has given credit to the wonders of animal magnetism has no right to laugh at the miracle of the Holy Thorn. Putting aside the inference respecting supernatural agency, the fact itself, attested by such men as Felix, Arnauld, Racine, and Pascal, who had full opportunity to satisfy themselves of the truth of the statement, cannot be lightly questioned. An almost desperate malady was suddenly cured under the circumstances related. Is it reasonable to suppose, that this event was produced by the special interposition of the Deity in behalf of the Jansenists? Thinking and judicious persons at the present day will answer this question, without hesitation, in the negative. They will admit the mysterious character of disease, and the remarkable results often produced by the working of occult natural causes, like the wonderful operations of sympathy, and the curative effects of a lively imagination and strong emotions. But rather than admit the interference of supernatural causes, they will accept the commentary of Voltaire, apart from the diabolical sneer with which it is uttered. "It is not very likely," says the old scoffer, "that God, who makes no miracles to impart a knowledge of our religion to nineteen twentieths of mankind, to whom this religion is either unknown or an object of horror, did actually interrupt the order of nature for a little girl, in order to justify a few nuns, who pretended that Cornelius Jansen did not write about a dozen lines which were attributed to him, or that he wrote them with a different intention from that imputed to him by the Jesuits."

Neither the publication of the "Provincial Letters," nor the miracle of the Holy Thorn, sufficed to avert for a long period the persecution and final ruin of the sect of the Jansenists. But the respite thus procured lasted till the death of Pascal, who was thus spared the bitter anguish of behold-

ing the defeat and dispersion of his beloved associates. His physical sufferings now became extreme, and, in 1658, they were increased by a long-continued toothache, which almost entirely deprived him of sleep. During the restless hours of the night, thus passed in an agony of pain, his mind reverted to his former mathematical pursuits, and, as a mere diversion, he meditated and solved his famous problems relative to the cycloid. He proposed to find the measure and centre of gravity of any segment whatever of the curve, and the dimensions and centres of gravity of the solids which such a segment forms by revolving round the abscissa or the ordinate. A reward was publicly offered to any geometer who should be able to solve these problems, and the most distinguished mathematicians then in Paris were appointed as judges for the trial. The task proposed was one of no ordinary difficulty ; for Leibnitz and Newton had not yet appeared to develope the marvellous powers of the infinitesimal calculus, which now enables the tyro in science to answer more intricate questions than these with ease and precision. But two attempts were made to gain the prize ; one by the Jesuit Lallouère, and the other by Wallis, the English mathematician. Both were judged to be unsatisfactory, and Pascal, who had hitherto kept himself concealed under the signature of Amos Dettonville, an anagram of Louis de Montalte, the name affixed to the " Provincial Letters," then published his own solutions, which commanded the applause of all the scientific world. A controversy ensued with the disappointed competitors ; but the opinion of those who were competent to decide such questions was so decisive in favor of Pascal, that it is not necessary to review the grounds of the dispute.

The mind of the religious enthusiast could not long be diverted by such labors from the more solemn topics which had now for years engrossed his attention. His devotional exercises became more and more absorbing, and the practices of penitence and self-denial, to which he submitted, were rapidly consuming his enfeebled powers of life. Devoting nearly his whole income to the service of the poor, he deprived himself of every luxury, and of most of the comforts of ordinary existence. In a small chamber, from which he had caused even the tapestry to be removed, lest it should gratify his eye, and where he would not allow himself

the services of a single domestic, so long as his strength sufficed for making his own bed, he passed most of his time in prayer and the study of the Scriptures. To this cheerless and unfurnished apartment men distinguished in every walk of science and letters frequently resorted, to profit by the conversation of the greatest genius of his country, and perhaps of his age. He talked with vivacity and wit, as might be expected from the author of the “ Provincial Letters,” and displayed without effort or reserve the stores of his information and the vast range of his intellect. Human nature is weak, and he could not but be gratified and flattered to find his conversation so acceptable to others, and to observe the superiority of his spirit to theirs. But this pleasure was a weakness, it was even a sin, in the eyes of the pious devotee. It was to be mortified, with the other enticements of the flesh, and to be kept in subjection to the love of God and the hope of heaven. He wore a girdle, with sharp points on the inside, next to his flesh, and when he felt any movement of vanity or extraordinary pleasure in conversation, he pressed the iron torture more closely to his side, that physical pain might remind him of his frailty and his duty. Pitable and perverted, indeed, though fervent and pure in him, was the religious faith which led to the infliction of such gratuitous suffering.

In strict conformity to his principle, that it was necessary to renounce all the pleasures of this world, he tried to stifle even the ordinary impulses of natural affection, and to preserve a cold and rigid exterior to his nearest friends, even when his heart was overflowing with kindness and love. He would not permit the caresses of his sister’s children, saying that it was the indulgence of a sinful love ; but he showed his real tenderness for them by many substantial proofs. Madame Perier once complained to her sister, that their brother spoke coldly to her, and even seemed to be annoyed when she was rendering to him the most affectionate services in his illness. Jacqueline, who shared his religious fervor, understood his motives better, and explained them. “ And in truth,” says the elder sister, “ when there was occasion for my brother’s assistance, he showed so much eagerness to embrace it, and so many proofs of affection, that I had no longer any reason to doubt that he loved me.” His kindness was not confined to those with whom he was connected by

natural ties ; on the sick and destitute stranger his bounty was lavished with all the heroism of benevolence. During his last illness, he had given a lodging in his house to a poor man and his son, from whom he received no return but gratitude. The son was attacked with the small-pox, and could not be carried to another habitation without danger. Pascal's feeble condition required the constant care of his sister, and as her children had not had this disease, he desired to save them from the risk of receiving the infection through their mother's attendance upon himself. Under these circumstances, weak and suffering as he was, he gave up his own home to the sick boy, and went to reside at the house of his sister.

Except his elder sister, Madame Perier, he was now alone in the world. His father had died in 1651, and the loss had made a deep impression upon him ; for the similarity of their characters and pursuits had drawn them together in a closer and more affectionate intimacy than that which usually exists between parent and child. A letter which he wrote on this occasion is preserved among his works, and shows a spirit of the most exalted piety, without a trace of cant or affected feeling. Ten years afterwards, he lost Jacqueline also, the infant actress, whose graceful pleading had redeemed their father from exile, and whose later years had been entirely consecrated to God's service in the nunnery at Port Royal. She had become sub-prioress in this institution, and her death was hastened by perplexity and grief, after the machinations of the Jesuits had at length caused the inexorable decree to go forth, that all the Jansenist nuns should subscribe the formulary, which contained an explicit renunciation of the opinions they had so long cherished. Strange effect, that a perverted faith and ecclesiastical persecution should cause a woman to die of grief, because required to sign a declaration, that the five propositions in their heretical sense were actually written in the book of Jansenius ! The historian of the Port Royalists records the remark which she made on her death-bed, that she was “ the first victim of the formulary.” Pascal was tenderly attached to her, and when informed of her death, exclaimed with a sigh, “ God grant that my end may be like hers ! ”

His own life was now rapidly drawing to a close, though one work still remained for him to accomplish. It was meet that a spirit touched to so fine issues should not leave the

world without bequeathing to it a more valuable and befitting memorial of united genius and piety than was contained in the letters respecting the controversy with the Jesuits. For three years before his death, the progress of his disease, and the paroxysms of pain that he endured, left only infrequent and short intervals during which his mind was capable of effort ; but these he zealously employed in making preparations for a great work on the philosophy of human nature and the proofs of the Christian religion. On these subjects he wrote down detached thoughts, as they occurred to him, upon loose scraps of paper ; and when he was incapable of holding the pen for himself, a faithful domestic sat by his bedside, and wrote from his dictation. In this way there was accumulated a mass of unconnected hints and aphorisms, which he was not allowed to arrange and complete.

In the summer of 1662, another painful disease was added to those which had already undermined his constitution and brought him to the brink of the grave. When this malady was at its height, frequently depriving him of consciousness, he was removed to his sister's house for the reason already mentioned. There he tranquilly occupied himself in preparing for death. He made his will, leaving large sums to the poor ; and would have bequeathed to them his whole property, if the condition of his sister's children, who were not rich, had not required his aid. As he could not do more for the sick and the destitute, he wished at least to die among them, and he eagerly desired his friends to carry him to the Hospital for the Incurables. They could dissuade him from executing this intention only by promising, that, if he recovered, he should be free to devote his whole life and property to the service of the poor. In the beginning of August, as his end was obviously nigh at hand, he called with great earnestness for the last services of the Church. This request was at length granted, after a fainting-fit had occurred, which lasted so long that his friends believed he was dead. But he recovered sufficiently to raise himself on the couch, and receive the sacrament with marks of resignation and deep feeling, which drew tears from all the beholders. A moment afterwards, he fell into convulsions, which closed the scene. He died on the 29th of August, 1662, aged thirty-nine years. In the church of St. Etienne du Mont, at Paris, a marble tablet on one of the pillars near the great altar, with a simple in-

scription, informs the reader that he is standing upon the tomb of Pascal.

“ Such,” says his able biographer, Bossut, “ was this extraordinary man, who was endowed by nature with all the gifts of the understanding ; a geometer of the first rank, a profound logician, a lofty and eloquent writer. If we remember, that, in the course of a very short life, and while suffering under almost constant attacks of disease, he invented the arithmetical machine, the principles of the calculation of chances, and the method of solving the problems respecting the cycloid ; that he finally determined the great question, which was dividing the opinions of the scientific world, concerning the pressure of the atmosphere ; that he was the first to establish by mathematical proofs the general laws of the equilibrium of fluids ; that he wrote one of the most perfect works which ever appeared in the French language ; that in his “ *Thoughts* ” there are passages of unrivalled eloquence and depth of reflection,—we shall be ready to believe, that a greater genius never existed in any country or in any age.”

The loose hints and unconnected fragments, which he had prepared for his great work on the proofs of the Christian religion, were first collected and published in 1670, under the title of “ *Thoughts of M. Pascal upon Religion and some other Topics.* ” They were left at his death in a state of utter confusion, and in the first edition many of them were suppressed, and the others were printed in a very defective arrangement, so that portions of the work appeared very obscure. Bossut superintended a complete edition of them in 1779, having diligently examined the original manuscripts, and perfected the classification which was commenced by Condorcet. A few years before, Voltaire had published an edition, with notes such as might be expected from one of his character and principles. He hated Pascal’s creed, and called him “ a sublime misanthrope ” ; but according to his own confession, he had studied the “ *Provincial Letters* ” and the “ *Thoughts*,” till he almost knew them by heart. We read them now as general aphorisms, which apparently have little immediate connection with each other, though the leading purpose of the writer is sufficiently obvious, and they all seem to converge towards the great questions respecting human nature and destiny. The fine discernment of the writer, the scientific exactness and condensation of the style, are the more apparent from the broken and fragmentary condition of the “ *Thoughts*.” There is a want of roundness and flow in the

composition, but it is admirable for terseness and epigrammatic point. Sometimes he is hurried away by the love of antithesis, and the expression is often so elliptical as to be obscure. But the original and striking character of the reflections, the keen analysis of motives, the vivacity and energy of the style, the rapid and forcible progress of the arguments, and the singular richness and novelty of the illustrations, command the reader's attention through all these disadvantages. A more impressive and eloquent work does not exist in the language.

The "Thoughts" are deeply tinged with the despondency of the writer's mind, and with the peculiarities of his religious opinions. He seems to triumph in exposing the weakness and imperfection of human nature, and the vanity of human pursuits. The corruption of the heart and the weakness of the intellect are the themes on which he most willingly expatiates, using at times bitter sarcasm and the loftiest invective. "His melancholy genius," says Hallam, "plays in wild and rapid flashes, like the lightning round the scathed oak, about the fallen greatness of man." But it is not with the mocking spirit of a satirist that he dilates upon the fallen and wretched condition of our race. In his eyes, man is weak and degraded, but not contemptible; his view is fixed as much upon the heights from which he has fallen, as upon the abyss into which he is plunged. His magnificent lamentations are uttered in the spirit of Jeremiah weeping over the sins of his nation, and pointing out the ruin with which it is menaced. He seeks to humble only that he may exalt, to point out the frailty and wretchedness of man's condition in this world, only that his attention may be diverted from it, and fixed upon the unutterable splendors of the life to come. "Man is so great," he says, "that his grandeur appears from the knowledge he has of his own misery. A tree knows not that it is wretched. True, it is sad to know that we are miserable; but it is also a mark of greatness to be aware of this misery. Thus all the wretchedness of man proves his nobleness. It is the unhappiness of a great lord, the misery of a dethroned king." The misery of our present condition is aggravated by the consciousness that we have fallen from a state of innocence and peace. Like the poet, Pascal finds that there is no greater grief than the recollection of happiness formerly enjoyed. "Who, but a discrowned monarch," he asks, "is

grieved that he does not possess a throne? Who thinks himself unhappy, because he has but one mouth? And who is not unhappy, if he has but one eye? No one ever thought of sorrowing, because he has not three eyes; but he is inconsolable, if he has but one."

The chief purpose of the work is to show man's need of religion, in order both to explain the enigma of his present state, and to console him in the midst of privation and suffering. The argument is not addressed to the understanding, but to the feelings; and its aim is rather to persuade than to convince. "The heart has its reasons," he says, "which the intellect knoweth not of; we perceive this truth in a thousand things. It is the heart, and not the reason, which finds out God; and this is perfect faith, God made known to the heart." Metaphysical proofs of a God, he continues, are so far removed from the ordinary sphere of human reason, and so abstruse, that they make little impression; if serviceable to a few, they will be so only so long as the demonstration is before them; an hour afterwards, they will fear they have been deceived. Cicero expresses the same thought still more clearly. *Nescio quo modo, dum lego, assentior; cum posui librum, et tecum ipse capi cogitare, assensio omnis illa elabitur.* Pascal argues further, that this kind of proof can lead only to a speculative knowledge of God, and to know him in this manner is nearly as bad as to be entirely ignorant of him. In order to know God like a Christian, man must become acquainted with the misery of his own condition, his unworthiness, and his need of a mediator. These truths must not be separated, or they will become not only useless, but injurious. "To know God, without being aware of our own misery, gives birth to pride; to be conscious of our own wretchedness, without any knowledge of Jesus Christ, leads to despair. The knowledge of the Saviour exempts us both from pride and despair; for in him we find God, and the secret of our miserable state, and the means of rising above it." We must become acquainted with human things, he adds, before loving them; but we must love divine things, in order to know them.

It is obvious, that Pascal's intention was to create the state of mind which is necessary for the due reception of religious truth, before offering any arguments in direct support of that truth. He seeks first to humble the pride of the intellect, to

point out the enigmas and inconsistencies of our nature, its greatness and feebleness, its pride and abjectness, to convince mankind of their degraded and corrupt condition, and then to show, in the sublime mysteries of Christian faith, at once an explanation of their fallen state, a solace for their sufferings in this world, and a glorious hereafter. "Every one," he says, "must take his side, and range himself in the ranks either of Pyrrhonism or dogmatism; for he who thinks to remain neuter will be a Pyrrhonist *par excellence*; this neutrality is the very essence of Pyrrhonism." But the difficulty of making the choice is great; for "reason confutes the dogmatists, and nature confounds the skeptics; we have an incapacity of demonstration, which the former cannot overcome; we have a conception of truth, which the latter cannot disturb." Thus bandied about between opposing difficulties, constantly urged to continue a pursuit which can never be successful, man is disappointed, helpless, and miserable, unless light come to him from heaven, and an almighty arm be stretched out for his aid. "Man," he observes, "has a secret instinct, that leads him to seek diversion and employment from without; this springs from the consciousness of his continual misery. He has another secret impulse, remaining from the grandeur of his primitive state, which teaches him that happiness can exist only in repose. And from these two contrary instincts, there arises in him an obscure idea, concealed in the depths of the soul, that prompts him to seek repose through agitation, and even to fancy that the contentment he does not enjoy will yet be found, if by struggling still a little longer he can open the door to rest. Thus passes his whole life. He seeks for repose by contending against certain obstacles; and when he has surmounted them, repose itself becomes insupportable."

The book is so incomplete and fragmentary, that it is very difficult to select passages which will give a fair view of the drift of his remarks, or the general characteristics of his manner. His language, also, from its remarkable compression and terseness, hardly admits of being translated without losing most of its vigor. But the following extract may give some idea of his power of thought and utterance.

"Let not man confine his view simply to the objects which surround him; let him contemplate all nature in its lofty and entire majesty; let him consider the great orb set like an ever-burning

beacon to illumine the universe ; let the earth appear to him like a point, in comparison with the vast circle which this luminary seems to describe ; let him wonder that this vast orbit is itself but a delicate point, when compared with that of the stars which roll in the firmament. If our sight stops here, the imagination passes beyond. The intellect ceases to conceive, before nature fails to supply. All that we see of the universe is but a spot imperceptibly small in the ample bosom of nature. No idea approaches the extent of infinite space. In vain would we dilate our conceptions ; we image to ourselves only atoms, in comparison with the reality. It is an infinite sphere, of which the centre is everywhere, and the circumference nowhere. And it is one of the most striking marks of the omnipotence of God, that our imagination is lost in this thought.

“ And now, returning to himself, let him consider what man is, in comparison with all that is ; let him look upon himself as lost in this by-corner of nature ; and from the appearance of this little dungeon in which he is lodged — this visible world — let him learn to estimate himself, and the cities and kingdoms of this earth, at their true value. In truth, what is man in the midst of nature ? A cipher in respect to the infinite, and all in comparison with nonentity, — a mean betwixt nothing and all. He is infinitely far removed from the two extremes ; and his being is not less distant from the nothingness whence he was drawn, than from the infinite in which he is ingulfed. In the order of intelligent things, his intellect holds the same rank that his body does in the expanse of nature ; all that he can do is to discern some phenomena from the midst of things, in eternal despair of ever knowing their beginning or their end. All things came from nothing, and extend even to the infinite. Who can follow this astonishing progress ? The author of these marvels understands them ; to all others they are unintelligible. We burn with desire to know every thing, and to build a tower which shall rise even to the heavens. But our whole edifice cracks, and the earth opens beneath us even to the abyss.”

With this striking picture of the insignificance and weakness of man, contrast the following sublime reflection upon his grandeur as a thinking soul. “ Man is the feeblest branch of nature, but it is a branch that thinks. It is not necessary that the whole universe should rise in arms to crush him. A vapor, a drop of water, is enough to kill him. But if the universe should crush him, he would still be nobler than that which causes his death ; for he knows that he is dying, and the universe knows nothing of its power over him.” It is in

view of contrarieties like these, that Pascal exclaims, “What an enigma, then, is man ! What a strange, chaotic, and contradictory being ! Judge of all things, feeble earth-worm, depositary of the truth, mass of uncertainty, glory and butt of the universe, — if he boasts himself, I abase him ; if he humbles himself, I make my boast of him ; and I always contradict him, till he comprehends that he is an incomprehensible monster.”

The great doctrine of the book, to which most of the preceding illustrations are subservient, is the duty of the entire submission of human reason in matters of faith. To this precept the writer recurs again and again, and seems never to be weary of inculcating it. Unquestionably it is a great truth, but a most perilous one to define and apply. He admits, that “ reason alone can tell where reason ends.” The humility of his spirit in enforcing this dogma appears the more remarkable, when contrasted with his singular boldness and independence of thought upon all other topics. On all matters of scientific inquiry, his resistance to the weight of authority, and his assertion of the right of private judgment, is one of the most striking traits of his genius. “ Truth,” he says, “ is the most ancient of all things, — older than all the opinions that have been had of it ; whatever aspect antiquity may present, truth, however lately discovered, ought always to have the advantage over it ; it is gross ignorance to imagine that nature began to be, when it began to be known.” His success in refuting the old scholastic doctrine of nature’s abhorrence of a vacuum probably strengthened this independence of mind, and led him to dwell upon it with more earnestness. His fine remark, in speaking of the weight due to authority, that the ancients after all were only the children among mankind, has been so often cited without giving him credit for it, that it is worth while to quote it in his own words, though with considerable abridgment.

“ Animals make no progress. The hexagonal cells of bees were as accurately measured and finished a thousand years ago, as they are at the present day. It is not so with man, who is born for eternity. He is ignorant at first, but constantly acquires knowledge, not only from his own experience, but from the accumulated wisdom of his predecessors. Men are now very nearly in the same condition that the ancient philosophers would have arrived at, if they could have lived till our times, constantly add-

ing to their knowledge what they might have acquired by study during so many centuries. All the generations of men during so many ages ought to be considered only as one man, who lives for ever, and is continually learning. Hence, how improper it is to respect philosophers for their antiquity ! For as old age is the period farthest removed from infancy, who does not see, that the old age of this universal man ought not to be sought for in the years nearest to his birth, but in those most remote from it ? Those whom we call the ancients were truly young in all things, and formed the infancy of mankind. As we have joined to their knowledge the experience of the ages which came after them, it is in us that this antiquity is to be found which we are wont to revere in others.”

As Lord Bacon says nearly the same thing, it is not unlikely that Pascal derived the first hint of it from the writings of the English philosopher ; which is a farther proof of what we have already had reason to suspect, that he had profited by these writings in the earlier part of his career. After this resolute assertion of the liberties of mind in questions of human science, it is lamentable to find Pascal carrying his principle of submission in matters of faith so far as deliberately to state the following monstrous and revolting doctrine. “What can be more contrary to the rules of our wretched justice, than to damn eternally an infant incapable of volition, for an offence in which he seems to have had no share, as it was committed six thousand years before he was born ? Certainly, nothing shocks us more rudely than this doctrine ; and yet, without this mystery, the most inconceivable of all, we are incomprehensible even to ourselves. Man is more inconceivable without this mystery, than the mystery is inconceivable to man.”

Only this submissive and childlike spirit in religious inquiry could have retained the otherwise bold and inquisitive intellect of Pascal in bondage to the Romish Church. This frame of mind may be partially accounted for by his experience in the Jansenist controversy, which had led him to put great stress upon the distinction between the *droit* and the *fait*, between questions of doctrine and matters of fact. He was thus induced blindly to accept whatever was taught by the fathers and the councils, while he opposed with unflinching skepticism the doctrines of the scholastic philosophy. He refers frequently to the Catholic doctrine respecting the

eucharist, and the Calvinistic one of the transmission of sin, in illustration of his favorite theme, the incapacity of human nature to comprehend religious truth. The following acute remark relates to the practice of auricular confession.

“ Is it not true, that we hate the truth and those who utter it to us, while we love those who practise pleasant deceptions upon us, and wish to be esteemed by them as different beings from what we are? Here is a proof of it which shocks me. The Catholic religion does not require one to make known his sins indifferently to all the world ; it permits him to conceal them from the view of other men in general ; but it makes an exception in favor of one person, to whom it commands him to disclose the very depths of his heart, and to appear in his sight as he really is. There is but one man in the world whom it commands us thus to disabuse ; and it binds him to inviolable secrecy, so that this knowledge is in him as if it did not exist at all. Can we imagine any thing more charitable and mild ? And yet, the corruption of man is such, that he finds even this law too severe, and it is one of the principal reasons which have caused a great part of Europe to revolt against the Church. How unjust and unreasonable is the heart of man, to object to doing to one person what it would be only fair to do to all men ! For is it just that we should deceive them ? There are different degrees in this aversion to the truth ; but it may be said to exist in all in some measure ; for it is inseparable from self-love.”

This is very ingenious, but it is sophistical. We do not love nor practise deception *as such*, or for its own sake. We detest the flatterer, and cast him off as soon as his falsehood is exposed. We are pleased, indeed, when we learn that others entertain a good opinion of us ; but this is only a mark of the kindly sympathy which binds societies of men together. The avowal, whether true or false, of this opinion is a matter of no substantive importance ; it is the fact alone in which we are interested ; if thoroughly convinced of the existence of this opinion, we could very well dispense with the expression of it. We are reluctant to expose our faults, because unwilling to fall in the estimation of our friends, or to afford matter of triumph to our enemies ; but concealment is not prized for its own sake, nor from any wish to deceive. We fear ungenerous and harsh constructions ; if the fault could be made known with all its palliating circumstances, and thus seem as excusable in the eyes of oth-

ers as it appears in our own, its disclosure would be a matter of comparative indifference. Some feelings, also, though perfectly innocent, are sensitive, and fear the light ; we conceal them, certainly without any consciousness of wrong, or any possibility of injurious deception. Faults are also hidden ; for though wrong in themselves, they may be harmless in respect to others, whose good opinion we prize, and therefore may be concealed from them without leading them into error, or exposing them to hazard. It is altogether too harsh to call silence deception, when it is practised under a belief that others have no right to know a secret which in no wise concerns their welfare, and which they would be likely to misconstrue, because all the attendant circumstances cannot be explained to them. Protestants object to auricular confession, not so much from unwillingness to confess their secret sins, as from a dislike of the assumption of authority, by a person weak and fallible like themselves, to know and judge their actions. Veracity is always a duty ; but Pascal forgets that silence also is often a virtue. He might have been reminded of it by the next illustration which he gives of man's insincerity and opposition to the truth, from the fact, that the best friends often speak unguardedly of each other when out of hearing, and from the mischief that is often caused by indiscreet reports of such conversations. If every man, says he, knew all that his best friend had said of him, there would not be three friends left in the world. Such reports often do mischief, we admit ; yet not because they are true, but because they are imperfect. If one reported not only the indiscreet remark, but all the circumstances which led to it, the innocent intention with which it was uttered, and the unwillingness of the speaker to cause pain or commit a wrong, no breach of friendship would ensue.

We have no space to carry any further our analysis of this remarkable book, which such competent judges as Dr. Arnold have ranked among the "greatest masterpieces of human genius." Our remarks, desultory and incomplete as the work itself, must end with the citation of a few more of the aphorisms, though much of their spirit necessarily escapes in a translation. Speaking of the Jewish Scriptures, Pascal observes : —

"I find no reason to doubt the truth of a book which contains

all these things ; for there is a great difference between a book which a person makes and throws among a people, and a book which of itself makes a people. We cannot doubt that the book is at least as old as the people."

" Between us and heaven, hell or annihilation, there is only human life, which of all things in the world is the frailest."

" When we would show any one that he is mistaken, our best course is to observe on what side he considers the subject, for his view of it is generally right on his side, and admit to him, that he is right so far. He will be satisfied with this acknowledgment, that he was not wrong in his judgment, but only inadvertent in not looking at the whole of the case. For we are less ashamed of not having seen the whole, than of being deceived in what we do see ; and this may perhaps arise from an impossibility of the understanding being deceived in what it does see, just as the perceptions of the senses, as such, must always be true."

" Nature has its perfections, to show that it is the image of God, and its faults, to show that it is only his image."

" Unbelievers are the most credulous persons in the world ; they believe the miracles of Vespasian, in order not to believe those of Moses."

" The multitude which cannot be reduced to unity is confusion ; and the unity which does not depend on multitude is tyranny."

" The synagogue did not perish, because it was a type of the church ; but as it was only a type, it fell into servitude. The symbol existed until the reality appeared, in order that the church might always be visible, either in the image which foreshadowed it, or in reality."

" What can be more ridiculous and vain than the doctrine of the Stoics, and what more baseless than their whole reasoning ? They conclude, that what a man can sometimes do he can always do ; and because the desire of glory enables those who are actuated by it to accomplish something noble, that others will be able to do as much. Theirs are the convulsive efforts of a man in a fever, which one in health cannot imitate."

" I cannot pardon Descartes. It was his ambition, in his system of philosophy, to be able to do without God altogether ; but he was obliged to suppose the Deity gave the world a fillip in order to set it in motion ; after which there was nothing more for him to do."

" We are not to suppose that Plato and Aristotle always wore their long robes, and appeared as dignified and serious personages. They were good-natured persons, who enjoyed a laugh with their friends, like the rest of the world ; and when they wrote upon legislation and politics, it was only by way of enjoying them-

selves and seeking diversion. This was the least philosophical and the least serious portion of their lives ; the most philosophical part of it was when they lived most simply and tranquilly."

"The virtue of a man ought not to be measured by his great efforts, but by his ordinary conduct."

"If we dreamed every night the same thing, it would affect us as much perhaps as the objects which we see every day. If an artisan was sure of dreaming every night, for twelve hours, that he was a king, I believe he would be nearly as happy as a king who should dream every night, for twelve hours, that he was an artisan. If we dreamed every night that we were pursued by enemies and harassed by terrible phantoms, while we passed every day in various occupations, we should suffer nearly as much as if the dream were true, and should dread going to sleep, as we now dread to wake, from the fear of really falling into such misfortunes. In truth, these dreams would cause nearly as much suffering as the reality. But because dreams are very various and unlike each other, what we see in them affects us much less than what we see in our waking hours, on account of the continuity of events when we are awake ; this continuity, however, is not so fixed and constant as to be wholly free from change, though the scenes shift less suddenly and less frequently. Life is only a rather more constant dream."

ART. II.—*History of the Law of Nations in Europe and America, from the earliest Times to the Treaty of Washington, 1842.* By HENRY WHEATON, LL. D., Minister of the United States at Berlin, Corresponding Member of the Academy of Moral and Political Science in the Institute of France. New York : Gould, Banks, & Co. 1845. 8vo. pp. 797.

IN taking notice of a work on international law written by the accomplished minister of the United States to the court of Berlin, we need not bespeak for it any attention, which the long established reputation of the author would not of itself command. Mr. Wheaton's name is no stranger to the pages of this Journal ; it has for years been most honorably connected with not only the literary, but the legal and diplomatic, annals of our country. No writer ever enjoyed greater